

Message Text

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17

ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 IO-14 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01

ARA-16 CU-04 DRC-01 /215 W
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R 191655Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8095

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 3073

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, NG, IV

SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY, APRIL 18

II - NIGER COUP AND RELATED MATTERS

REF: ABIDJAN 3072 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY SADDENED BY EVENTS IN
NIGER, PARTICULARLY SHOCKED BY DEATH OF MADAME DIORI, A WARM
WOMAN. CONCERNED THAT AFRICA BECOMING ANOTHER LATIN AMERICA, RULED
BY INEXPERIENCED MILITARY MEN, WHO WILL BE LESS ABLE TO GOVERN
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THAN CIVILIAN PREDECESSORS. COUNTRIES WILL BE LESS ABLE TO

ADVANCE ECONOMICALLY AS WELL. HE FEELS SURROUNDED IN ENTENTE AND WEST AFRICA BY MILITARY LEADERS. HE HAS NOT INTERVENED, HOWEVER, BECAUSE CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT ARE INTERNAL POLITICAL ACTS. HOUPHOUET IS DETERMINED TO PUSH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN HIS OWN COUNTRY'S NORTHERN REGION, WHERE "REAL PEASANTS" ARE WILLING TO STICK TO LAND IF THEY GET HELP WITH WATER AND CROP CULTIVATION. END SUMMARY.

2. AFRICA ANOTHER LATIN AMERICAN. FOLLOWING OUR RECEIVING HIGHLY SATISFACTORY RESPONSE ON MAIN PURPOSE OF CALL, (REFTEL) I EXPRESSED PERSONAL REGRETS RE MANNER IN WHICH HAMANI DIORI DEPOSED AND MME DIORI KILLED, IN VIEW HOUPHOUET'S WELL-KNOWN FRIENDSHIP WITH COUPLE. PRESIDENT RESPONDED IMMEDIATELY, NOTING SADLY THAT "POOR AFRICA IS BECOMING MORE LIKE LATIN AMERICA WITH ALL ITS MILITARY COUPS". HE WAS SURE THIS WAS FIRST AFRICAN COUP IN WHICH PROMINENT WOMAN HAD BEEN KILLED. IN FACT, HE SAID ONE HAD TO GO BACK TO MARI ANTOINETTE AND MARYQUEEN OF SCOTS TO FIND PARALLELS. WHY DID THEY KILL HER, HE ASKED RHETORICALLY. PRESIDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTS OF HIS GOVERNMENT, NOT MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF AND FAMILY.

3. MME. DIORI'S LOVE OF CHILDREN. PRESIDENT THEN DESCRIBED TOUCHING INCIDENT OF MME. DIORI HAVING CALLED HIM LAST WEEK TO SEE WHETHER HE COULD HAVE HER THREE CHILDREN WHO WERE STUDYING IN ABIDJAN FLOWN UP FOR EASTER WEEKEND. HOUPHOUET DETERMINED THAT ONLY ONE WAS IN ABIDJAN AND OTHER TWO TRAVELLING AROUND IVORY COAST IN PLACES INACCESSIBLE TO HIS AIRCRAFT. HE CALLED BACK TO SEE WHETHER SHE WOULD STILL LIKE TO SEE THAT DAUGHTER AND, WITH FAVORABLE RESPONSE, HAD HER FLOWN THERE APRIL 14. HIS PILOT REPORTED BACK ON WARM EMBRACE OF MOTHER AND DAUGHTER. (N.B. DAUGHTER UNHARMED IN COUP, BUT 17 YEAR OLD SON WOUNDED IN DEFENSE OF FATHER. CONTRARY TO OTHER RUMORS, HOUPHOUET SAID DIORI HIMSELF ALSO UNHURT.)

4. INEXPERIENCED MILITARY GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT COMPLAINED THAT NEW NIGER GOVERNMENT ALL SO YOUNG AND INEXPERIENCED, ALL MILITARY.

NEW JUSTIC MINISTER, HE SAID, NEVER TRAINED IN LAW. PTT BEING RUN BY MERE LIEUTENANT. HE THREW UP HANDS IN DESPAIR THAT THEY COULD NEVER IMPROVE ON NIGER'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. NIGER IS SO TERRIBLY POOR, UNLESS IT FINDS MCNTERALS, THAT NO GOVERNMENT CAN HELP,
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LEAST OF ALL ONE THAT HAS NO EXPERIENCE, MAY HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE OF OUTSIDE WORLD AND LEFT BITTERNESS AFTER COUP. ONLY THROUGH ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND POLITICAL STABILITY CAN THESE POORER LDC'S SURVIVE. I SAID I ASSUMED U.S. WOULD CONTINUE DROUGHT RELIEF, BUT WAS UNSURE ABOUT LONG-RANGE PROJECTS. HE AGREED WE HAD TO CONTINUE RELIEF EFFORTS.

5. INPACT ON ENTENTE. PRESIDENT REMARKED THAT HE NOW SURROUNDED

BY MILITARY LEADERS IN ALL OTHER STATES OF ENTENTE COUNCIL (DAHOMEY, NIGER, TOGO, UPPER VOLTA). ALL HIS FRIENDS ARE GONE. MILITARY MEN IN THESE COUNTRIES HAVE NOT IMPROVED ECONOMIC CONDITIONS. ONLY IN TOGO, WHERE MINISTERS ARE CIVILIANS, HAS THERE BEEN SOME PROGRESS. (HE DIGRESSED TO MENTION MOBUTU, AS WELL, WHO HAD GOOD SENSE TO BRING IN CIVILIAN MINISTERS.) AS EVIDENCE OF THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THESE MILITARY GOVERNMENTS IN DEALING WITH ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, HE CITED CONTINUING INWARD MIGRATION OF LABOR FROM MALI AND UPPER VOLTA TO IVORY COAST, PUTTING A BIG BURDEN ON LATTER AND SOON LIKELY TO REACH LIMITS OF IVORY COAST'S CAPACITY TO ABSORB.

6. HOUPHOUET'S NON-INTERVENTION IN NIGER. I ASKED WHETHER PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT NEW LEADERS IN NIGER. MISUNDERSTANDING MY QUESTION TO MEAN WHY HAD HE NOT INTERVENED BEFORE COUP, HOUPHOUET STATED FORCEFULLY THAT IVORY COAST HAD NEVER INTERFERED IN INTERNAL POLITICS OF ENTENTE STATES, EVEN THOUGH HE STRONGLY DISAGREED WITH WHAT WENT ON. THIS ALSO MEANT THAT HE WOULD REMAIN SILENT ON EVENTS THERE AND ALLOW FOR NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN NEW GOVERNMENT AND HIMSELF.

7. PRIDE IN PEOPLE IN NORTH OF IVORY COAST. IN DISCUSSION OF IMPACT OF DROUGHT ON SAHELIAN ECONOMIES, HOUPHOUET REFERRED TO LOWER RAINFALL IN IVORY COAST AS WELL, OVER PAST TEN YEARS. BUT, SAID HE, "MY PEOPLE OF THE NORTH ARE THE BEST IN THE COUNTRY. THEY ARE REAL PEASANTS. THEY STICK TO THEIR LAND. ALL THEY NEED IS WATER AND THE MEANS TO CULTIVATE CROPS. THEY DON'T MOVE OFF THE LAND TO THE CITIES. I AM LE PAYSAN PRESIDENT, SO I UNDERSTAND AND ADMIRE THIS," HE SAID. HE ADDED THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO HELP HIS NORTHERN PEOPLE THROUGH CORN VARIETIES AND SOYA PRODUCTION - WITH THE HELP OF THE UNITED STATES. AND HE REFERRED TO HIS MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE'S PRESENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON. PAO PERRIN COMPLIMENTED PRESIDENT ON EXCELLENT PRESS REPORTING OF HIS NORTHERN TRIP IN CONFIDENTIAL

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MARCH, AND PRESIDENT WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED.

8. COMMENT: I HAD NOT INTENDED TO RAISE ANY OTHER SUBJECTS AT THIS MEETING THAN THAT OF CULTURAL CENTER (REFTEL), PARTICULARLY SINCE WE HAD REQUESTED ONE DAY BEFORE AND RECEIVED APPROVAL DAY OF MEETING FOR THIS SESSIONN, IN MIDDLE PRESIDENT'S BUSY SCHEDULE. IT WAS OBVIOUS, HOWEVER, THAT NIGER COUP WAS MUCH ON HIS MIND. EVEN HIS STAFF AIDE BROUGHT IT UP WHILE WE WERE WAITING FOR PRESIDENT. DESPITE PREOCCUPATIONS, PRESIDENT APPEARED RELAXED AND PHILOSOPHICAL RATHER THAN SADDENED. HE LOOKED MUCH LESS TIRED THAT AT MY CREDENTIALS CEREMONY EXACTLY ONE WEEK EARLIER. OF FORTY MINUTES WE WERE WITH HIM, AT LEAST TWENTY-FIVE DEVOTED TO TOPICS THIS MESSAGE.
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